

NACIO 2008
Montana
Conference and Training Registration
Government to Government

Executive Summary

The Conference and Training Registration is a unique service that allows Montana state agencies and associated programs the ability to establish a conference and collect registration information online without having to build a custom website. This unique service collects all the necessary information from the conference administrators and uses that information to create a registration site. The registration site is available to accept registrations for the conference and allows registrants to select their classes, special events, and meals. Attendees can submit payment for any fees associated with the conference. The registrant and payment information is stored in an oracle database accessible to the conference administrators via an Administrative site for up to a year after the registration period ends. The Conference and Training Registration service simplifies the entire conference process; set up, registration, and administration for all Montana state entities.

The Conference and Training Registration is an innovative service that allows Montana state agencies and associated programs to establish a training session or conference and collect registrations online without having to build a custom website. This unique service collects all the necessary information from the conference administrators and uses the information to create a registration site that can process electronic payments. Attendees use the registration site to select their classes, special events, and meals and pay for the registration. The registrant and payment information is stored in a database that can be accessed by the conference staff for a year after the registration period ends. This system simplifies the set up, registration, and administration for conferences and training sessions for state agencies and programs.

Prior to the creation of the Conference and Training Registration service, the Department of Administration spent a substantial amount of time and effort providing support for various conference pages and registrations. In order to accept online registrations, separate web forms had to be built for each conference and the agency responsible for the conference had to arrange for payment through the state payment portal or alternative means. In addition, since the registration and the payment systems were separate, reconciling the funds with the registrations was very cumbersome. Due to the complexity and time, many agencies chose not to use online methods for conference registrations.

With the introduction of the Conference and Training Registration service, the information associated with both payments and registrations are now stored in the same oracle database. The agency staff, or conference administrators, has access to this information in real time which allows them to easily track attendees and make changes as needed.

The ability to set up the details of the conference through a web interface has given conference organizers tremendous flexibility when creating the overall structure and unique registration pages necessary to make set up quick and easy. The Conference and Training Registration service not only provides Montana state agencies and associated programs with a single, convenient service to establish and manage conferences and training sessions but it also translates into significant cost savings for the agency in terms of time and resources.

Description:

The Conference and Training Registration service provides Montana state agencies and associated programs with a one-stop, convenient way to establish conferences or training sessions and produce an online registration site for their customers. The service walks the conference administrator through a detailed yet user-friendly, set up process when finished, produces a registration site to be used by those interested in attending the conference or training session.

The Administrative site allows conference staff to administer the conference by providing reports, access control, and money handling tools. The Conference and Training Registration service gives Montana state agencies and associated programs the ability to set up events, accept registrations, payments, sponsorships payments and trade booth registrations online, and view the necessary event information in real time.

Access to a particular conference is protected by a login screen which requires conference administrators to enter a username and password before being able to proceed. Next, the service walks the conference administrators through a set up process where the details of their events are established. Some of these details include identifying the registration fee(s), setting the registration periods, and identifying the information to be provided by the registrant. The service can accommodate sessions, meal and special events and the conference organizers can set up tracks for their registrants to ensure the necessary information is collected.

In addition to regular registrations, the Conference and Training Registration service also allows the conference administrators to accept sponsorships and registration for trade booths online; the details associated with each are established by the conference administrators. These features allow all money and registrations for an event to be completed through one-site and tracked in the same database as the general registrations.

Once the conference or training session has been established, attendees are then directed to the online service to register for the conference or training session; registration includes any classes, meals, or special events established during set-up. Once the registration is complete, the customer can complete the process by submitting payment for registration fees, if applicable. Payment can be submitted in one payment method or split the registration among several payment methods. This innovative solution allows state employees to pay for special events or spouses separately.

Throughout the registration process, the conference administrators are able to track the number of attendees and deposits in real time through the administration site. The administrative site provides detailed information through reports that include attendee, payment, registration, and refund information. Conference administrators can also issue and cancel coupons from this site to allow registrations free of charge. Coupons can also be used as payment for particular attendees during the registration process.

The Conference and Training Registration service provides all the tools necessary for the conference staff to handle all aspects of their registration, from set up to administration.

Significance:

Mt.gov assessed the Department of Administration's Conference and Training Registration service without a formal return on investment method and focused on the cost benefit to the customers and the agencies, and the value the service added.

There is a cost benefit to the customers because they no longer have to mail in a registration form with a check. Montana state agencies and associated programs have also seen a significant cost benefit from the Conference and Training Registration service in staff time due to a decrease in the number of paper forms needed to be processed as well as time and money to establish a custom web service to collect registrations.

As with all of the services built by mt.gov, there is a value added benefit for the customers and for the agency. The Conference and Training Registration service is easy to use, more efficient than a paper process, and makes collecting registration, sponsorship and trade booth fees possible online. The Department of Administration is able to spend less time working with various agencies on custom registration sites and can easily allow agencies to take care of all aspects of their conference or training.

By not paying development costs for the service, the Department of Administration saved over \$114,980.00. Maintenance and enhancements to the service are also provided at no charge. Maintenance cost savings for the state is currently more than \$34,900.00.

Benefit of Service:

The Conference and Training Registration service was launched in November 2005 and Mt.gov projected that in its first year the service would process between 10-20 conferences. Since its launch, over 230 conferences with 22 different Montana state agencies or associated programs have been processed.

The Conference and Training Registration service was developed and maintained without the use of tax dollars or a state general fund appropriation. This is possible through a public/private alliance between the state of Montana and mt.gov.